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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Briefing Report for the Chairman and
Ranking Minority Member, Committee
on Armed Services, United States Senate

December 1985

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DOD's Training Program for Polygraph Examiners



GAO/NSIAD-86-33BR



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

NATIONAL SECURITY AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

December 31, 1985

B-221497

The Honorable Barry M. Goldwater
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Ranking Minority Member,
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The enclosed briefing report provides the preliminary results of our review of the effectiveness of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) training program for polygraph examiners. This review is being conducted as requested by the Committee in its report on the Defense Authorization Act for 1985. We have discussed this briefing report with DOD officials, who agreed with the facts presented. We are continuing our evaluation of the issues raised in this briefing report and other aspects of the polygraph training program and, as agreed with your office, will report our findings and recommendations, as warranted, by December 1986.

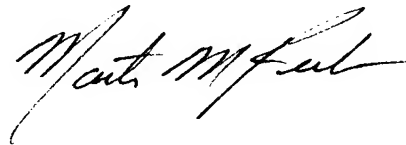
Our preliminary work indicates that DOD's current polygraph training program--including its school at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and its quality control policies and procedures for graduates--is thorough, compared to the requirements of the American Polygraph Association and other polygraph school programs. However, the following issues warrant further attention:

- Is the DOD polygraph school authorized to conduct polygraph examinations, and are such examinations conducted in accordance with DOD Directive 5210.48?
- What impact, if any, will a rapid expansion of the polygraph school have?
- Do the examiner training needs of DOD and other federal agencies warrant the construction of a new school building?
- What is Project Seven Screens and how does it relate to the congressionally authorized polygraph test program?

B-221497

In conducting our review, we visited DOD's polygraph school at Fort McClellan and reviewed the attendance records, training materials, instructor qualifications, and the physical plant, including the building and polygraph instruments. We also visited six offices of the DOD components that are authorized to conduct polygraph examinations--the Army (two offices), Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and National Security Agency. In addition, we visited three offices of two other federal agencies that send students to the school. For comparative purposes, we reviewed the school inspection manual of the American Polygraph Association and the curriculums of two other schools that also have been certified as meeting the standards of the Association.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this briefing report until 30 days have elapsed. At that time we will send copies to the Department of Defense and make copies available to interested parties. If you have any questions, please call me at 275-5140.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Martin M. Ferber". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Martin M Ferber
Associate Director

Enclosure

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DOD'S TRAINING PROGRAM
FOR POLYGRAPH EXAMINERS

BACKGROUND

DOD components reported that, as of June 30, 1985, they had 136 certified polygraph examiners, not including those at the National Security Agency (NSA). During the preceding 12 months, these examiners performed over 11,000 polygraph examinations for specifically authorized purposes, such as in criminal or counterintelligence investigations or as a means of exculpation.

In 1984, DOD proposed to expand the use of polygraph examinations to include personnel screening in determining individuals' eligibility for access to classified information protected within special access programs. The Defense Authorization Act of 1985, Section 1307, authorized a test program of screening examinations but limited the number to 3,500 in fiscal year 1985. The limit, however, does not apply to (1) individuals at the Central Intelligence Agency or NSA or (2) DOD's continued use of the polygraph for other purposes.

The authorization act requires the Secretary of Defense to report the results of fiscal year 1985 polygraph examinations (including both the test program and all other examinations) to the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services by December 31, 1985. However, because DOD did not issue a revised polygraph policy directive until December 1984 and because it was slow in implementing the test program, the Committees extended the period for the test program and authorized DOD to conduct a test in 1986, not to exceed 3,500 individuals, and in 1987, not to exceed 7,000. A subsequent Conference Report (H. Rept. No. 99-235) on the Defense Authorization Act for 1986 requires that the December 1985 report also include a discussion of the Secretary's plan to recruit and train additional polygraph examiners.

Polygraph-examiner training

Criteria for the selection, training, and supervision of DOD polygraph examiners have remained essentially the same since DOD Directive 5210.48, which governs DOD's polygraph program, was revised in 1975. The 1975 revision authorized the Secretary of the Army to establish and manage training programs for DOD polygraph examiners. In 1975, the Army established a polygraph training facility at its Military Police School at Fort McClellan. In August 1985, DOD redesignated the school as the DOD Polygraph Institute and designated the Secretary of the Army as the Executive Agent for polygraph training within DOD.

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE

The polygraph school at Fort McClellan has been offering two courses of instruction: a 12-week basic examiner course given four times a year, limited to 12 students, and a 3-week advanced or refresher course given once a year to experienced examiners. The curriculum for the basic examiner course has consisted of 4 weeks of academic instruction and 8 weeks of practical experience, during which time each student administered 50 polygraph examinations to Army recruits.

DOD is planning to extend the basic examiner course to 14 weeks in 1986, give the course three times a year, and increase the number of students in each class to 36. DOD has a two-phased program to accomplish this. In the first phase, DOD is modifying the existing school building, at a cost of about \$75,000, by adding six examining rooms and three offices for instructors. The school will use a double shift with day and evening sessions for the practice examinations. These changes will enable DOD to rapidly expand the capacity of its school from 48 to 108 students a year. In the second phase, DOD plans to construct a new building with 36 examining rooms (one for each student), and to offer single-shift courses three times a year. The construction of the new building will begin in fiscal year 1988 or earlier. It is estimated that this building will cost over \$3 million to build and furnish.

The 3-week refresher course was given once a year in 1980 through 1984, between sessions of the basic course. (The 1984 refresher course had 13 graduates.) DOD did not offer the course in 1985, but plans to give it again in 1986.

IS THE DOD POLYGRAPH SCHOOL AUTHORIZED TO
CONDUCT POLYGRAPH EXAMINATIONS, AND ARE
SUCH EXAMINATIONS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE
WITH DOD DIRECTIVE 5210.48?

DOD Directive 5210.48 authorizes the use of polygraph examinations for 10 purposes, but it does not specifically authorize students or experienced examiners to give the exam for training purposes at the school. However, each student in the basic course gives 50 examinations, and each examiner in the refresher course gives about 15 examinations--a total of over 2,000 examinations a year. DOD officials believe that these examinations are an essential part of the training program, and they are drafting a directive covering the operation of the school, which will authorize such examinations.

DOD Directive 5210.48 provides that DOD components shall ensure that adequate safeguards are provided for the protection of the rights and privacy of individuals subjected to polygraph examination. However, some of the Army recruits who were the subjects of the training examinations were not informed in advance that they were participating in a training exercise.

Also, the school was providing its students with a 60-page instruction on personnel screening techniques, which contained questions on sexual preference and conduct and on membership in unions and racial, ethnic, political, and religious organizations. DOD officials said that some of the questions were intended as training for NSA and for counterintelligence operations overseas. We questioned whether the personal nature of these questions could be a violation of DOD's policy on protecting individual rights and privacy.

DOD officials told us that they would ensure that recruits are told that their polygraph examinations are part of a training exercise. Also, on November 27, 1985, DOD directed the school to discontinue use of the instruction on personnel screening techniques and requested submission of related training material for review and approval by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. DOD officials also told us that adequate oversight of the polygraph and other personnel security programs was hampered by a lack of staff.

WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, WILL
THE RAPID EXPANSION OF THE
POLYGRAPH SCHOOL HAVE?

The rapid expansion of the polygraph school's basic examiner course to 108 students will require an additional 12 instructors to accommodate about 60 additional students annually. Since the polygraph school selects its instructors from DOD's polygraph-examiner staff, the instructors' departures from their home units could temporarily reduce the number of polygraph examinations that DOD is currently able to conduct. Furthermore, because all DOD polygraph examiner graduates must serve a minimum 6-month internship, during which they conduct at least 25 examinations under the supervision of a certified examiner, the influx of a large number of polygraph-school graduates could also temporarily reduce the number of examinations that DOD will be able to conduct. The reduction can occur because (1) the certified examiners cannot conduct examinations while they are monitoring those given by interns and (2) interns generally cannot conduct examinations as fast or as effectively, often requiring more reexaminations to resolve inconclusive results.

DO THE EXAMINER TRAINING NEEDS OF DOD
AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES WARRANT
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING?

The August 1985 project justification for a new school building, costing over \$3 million, cites the need to train 108 polygraph examiners to conduct over 10,000 more examinations a year. The justification states that the

"requirement is the direct result of Congressional mandated action in 1986 Defense Authorization Bill to expand DOD capability to conduct 10,500 'National Security' polygraph examinations in 1986 and 87 with requirement capability to conduct 10,000 plus 'National Security' examinations annually thereafter."

Further, the justification states that without the new building the

"Congressional mandate requirement to enhance our 'National Security' and effect a significant deterrent to spying cannot be accomplished because of inability to train the significant increase of polygraph examiners required to conduct the mandated polygraph screening examinations on an annual basis."

There is some uncertainty, however, as to the number of examinations that DOD will be conducting and the number of examiners it will need.

The Congress has authorized DOD to conduct 10,500 screening examinations in 1986 and 1987; however, the 10,000 plus annually thereafter, as stated in the project justification, has not yet been authorized. Furthermore, as discussed on pages 5 to 7, the Air Force has already been conducting about 2,500 screening examinations annually, which could count against this authorization. Consequently, it is unclear how many additional examiners DOD needs to conduct the 1,000 and 4,500 additional screening examinations within the congressional ceilings for 1986 and 1987, and thereafter.

It is unclear how many additional examiners DOD needs to do 10,000 additional tests. Also, as discussed on page 3, the recruiting of instructors from the examiner ranks and the influx of examiner interns could have a temporary impact on DOD's capability to do tests. We will evaluate data on examiner turnover--i.e., how many leave the government or go into different jobs--against a projected examination work load to determine how many student examiners DOD's school would have to graduate in the future.

DOD has, in the past, generally been unable to fill the school to its capacity of 48 students a year for a variety of reasons, such as difficulty in recruiting additional polygraph examiner candidates and last minute student cancellations. Part of the difficulty in recruiting examiner candidates is the result of DOD selection requirements, such as a degree from an accredited 4-year college and 2 years of investigative experience with a U.S. Government or other law enforcement agency. It is unclear if the school would also have similar problems in increasing the capacity to 108. As the following table shows, the school has graduated fewer than 48 students every year since 1980, except for 1983.

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE

Graduates from Basic Polygraph Examiner Courses, 1981 to 1985

<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Total number of graduates^a</u>	<u>DOD</u>	<u>Other federal agencies</u>	<u>State and local agencies</u>
1981	37	19 (51%)	16 (43%)	2 (6%)
1982	38	20 (53%)	18 (47%)	- -
1983	50	27 (54%)	23 (46%)	- -
1984	44	25 (57%)	19 (43%)	- -
1985	<u>44</u>	<u>31 (71%)</u>	<u>12 (27%)</u>	<u>1 (2%)</u>
Total	<u>213</u>	<u>122 (57%)</u>	<u>88 (41%)</u>	<u>3 (2%)</u>

^aOnly two attendees during this period did not graduate.

Current training requests indicate that the class beginning in January 1986, under the expanded capacity of 36, will have 28 students, with 19 from DOD and 9 from two other federal agencies. Later plans for school attendance were unavailable.

DOD officials stated that they expect many additional students to come from other federal agencies because of the issuance of National Security Decision Directive 196 on November 1, 1985. The directive expands the use of the polygraph because it establishes, as government policy, the use of aperiodic, non-life style, counterintelligence-type polygraph examinations. This examination could be given to any individual with access to classified sensitive-compartmented, communications-security, and other special-access-program information. The number of examiners that may be needed to implement this policy is unknown.

WHAT IS PROJECT SEVEN SCREENS AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO THE CONGRESSIONALLY AUTHORIZED POLYGRAPH TEST PROGRAM?

Before December 1984, the DOD polygraph directive did not authorize personnel screening examinations as discussed above. However, in November 1981, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy authorized the Air Force to initiate a test project, using screening examinations. The project, known as Seven Screens, became operational in May 1982 and, according to Air Force officials, involves about 2,500 polygraph examinations annually for special access programs. The following is a summary of the results of the Air Force screening examinations given under this project, from inception through September 30, 1985.

Project Seven Screens Polygraph Examinations

<u>Results</u>	<u>Number</u>
No deception indicated	8,293
Deception indicated	10
Inconclusive	2
No opinion	15
Refusal	<u>1</u>
Total	<u><u>8,321</u></u>

About 35 percent of the examinations involved military personnel, 5 percent involved government civilians, and 60 percent involved contractor employees. According to Air Force polygraph office officials, nine of the individuals tested were denied access. The officials did not know what action had been taken with respect to the individuals' security clearances because that is the responsibility of the government or contractor sponsor, and the polygraph office acts only as a support function. We will be following up to obtain more information on Project Seven Screens and the disposition of the cases where access was denied.

The written quality assurance procedures for this project are more extensive than those used by other DOD polygraph offices. They include supervisory monitoring of the examinations and multiple reviews of the polygraph charts. In addition, there is an oversight and review committee chaired by the Inspector General of the Air Force.

Senate Report 99-41 (April 29, 1985) shows that the Senate Committee on Armed Services' decision to extend the DOD test program relied on DOD information that "no persons have yet been examined under the authority of the test program." The Committee was informed of the existence of Project Seven Screens, but not of its magnitude of about 2,500 screening examinations per year.

Air Force polygraph officials suggested that higher Air Force officials did not want the project's examinations included in the 1985 DOD test program because of security reasons. Apparently the Air Force was concerned that such inclusion would generate questions that could result in the compromise of classified information related to the special access programs for which Project Seven Screens was used. However, information on the number of examinations under Project Seven Screens has been shown in unclassified Air Force reports starting in calendar year 1983.

DOD officials said that some Project Seven Screens examinations conducted in 1985 will be used in DOD's December 1985 report on the fiscal year 1985 test program, and will be counted as part of the 1986 test program. However, on

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December 19, 1985, DOD officials told us that only about 900 of the Project Seven Screens 1985 examinations are to be included in DOD's report on its 1985 test program. Also, they said that the Project's examinations may be excluded from the DOD test program after December 1985. We will follow up on DOD's actions in this regard.

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